



GRANT ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

Introduction

The mission of the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) is to administer the provisions of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Act in a manner that fosters and protects the health, safety, welfare, and economic well being of the people of the State.

In 1995, ABC embarked on a new and innovative approach to broaden and increase the level of alcoholic beverage law enforcement by working in partnership with cities and counties through a grant assistance project. The mission of the Grant Assistance to Local Law Enforcement Program is to work with law enforcement agencies to develop an effective, comprehensive and strategic approach to eliminating the crime and public nuisance problems associated with problem alcoholic beverage outlets, and then institutionalize those approaches within the local police agency.

Prior to this program, most contacts between ABC, local public agencies, and community groups generally occurred on a case-by-case basis for individual retail outlets. There was no systematic, pro-active strategy to address alcohol-related problems at the point of sale on a community-wide scale.

Problem retail outlets, even though they are a small percentage of the total, become magnets for crime and the “broken windows” in our communities that, unless fixed quickly, become the norm and deteriorate the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

Communities with a high concentration of alcohol outlets experience a greater number of alcohol-related problems. Problematic operations contribute disproportionately to the incidence of drug dealing, public drunkenness, drunk driving, underage drinking, assaults, and other conditions that breed neighborhood decay. Excessive complaints and calls for service at problem outlets divert already scarce police resources.

In the early 1990s, budget reductions at the State and local level greatly reduced law enforcement staff assigned to alcoholic beverage law enforcement. Many of the State’s police and sheriff’s departments re-prioritized their missions and diverted their ABC-related enforcement resources to other areas such as violent crime suppression and street patrol. There is now a strong movement by cities and communities for more rigorous enforcement to control the increasing number of alcohol outlets that have become focal points for crime.

Goals and Objectives

The main goals of the program are to (a) achieve the goals and objectives of the local enforcement agency’s grant agreements; (b) establish close working relationships between ABC district offices and the grant agencies; (c) prioritize law enforcement efforts and target those licensed outlets that cause alcohol-related crimes; (d) develop records management systems to ensure police reports are systematically sent to the ABC district offices as required by law; and (e) assist in the training of local law enforcement.

Program Components

To achieve its goals, the program emphasizes a “full-court press” strategy in correcting or eliminating alcohol-related problems at the point of sale with a strong emphasis on comprehensive enforcement tactics. An approach is used that brings all available Federal, State, and local resources to bear on the problem.

Individual grant agencies implement the full-court press through a variety of innovative project objectives, which usually include training of law enforcement personnel, community involvement, prevention, enforcement, records management and data systems, liaison with the ABC district office, and media involvement.

- **TRAINING.** Experienced ABC investigators are assigned to each of the grant agencies. Each agency's grant officers receive training in ABC law, alcohol enforcement strategies and tactics, administrative license revocation procedures, and community resources. These "grant teams" investigate the problem outlets and prepare cases for appropriate criminal, administrative, or civil action.
- **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT.** Grant teams involve the community in many ways, including showing residents how to maintain logs of nuisance conditions from nearby alcohol outlets.
- **PREVENTION STRATEGIES.** Grant teams use existing ABC prevention and education programs such as LEAD (Licensee Education on Alcohol and Drugs) and IMPACT (Informed Merchants Preventing Alcohol-Related Crime Tendencies), and they create new ones. Generally, grant teams use prevention strategies as a prelude to enforcement action. Education and prevention measures are aimed at institutionalizing responsible serving and selling practices in the industry.
- **ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIES.** During the grant period, ABC's Special Operations Unit and other ABC enforcement personnel work with the grant agencies and the community to identify problem alcohol outlets. Grant teams then target problem outlets for investigation. In addition to undercover investigations, strategies include programs such as Citizen's Arrest, Cops in Shops®, Minor Decoy, Shoulder Tap, and ROSTF (Retail Operating Standards Task Force).
- **RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND DATA SYSTEMS.** During the grant period, grant agencies devise new and improved systems to (a) ensure police reports are systematically sent to the ABC district office as required by law, and (b) track alcohol-related data and crime at licensed outlets. Many agencies have developed systems that have made it easier to gather, track, and maintain alcohol-related crime data.
- **BUILDING LIAISON.** Prior to receiving an ABC grant, some agencies already had a close working relationship with the local ABC District Office. Others develop the relationships through the Grant Assistance Program.

- **MEDIA.** Grant agencies use the media to effectively publicize their activities. Media stories are generally positive, telling how the grant funds are used to crack down on alcohol-related crime. The media coverage helps bring about voluntary compliance among licensees who may be unaware of the law.

Results and Impact

The program's success can be measured quantitatively by the reduction in alcohol-related arrests, crimes, and calls for services in many jurisdictions. Further quantitative measures include the number of administrative accusations registered, arrests and citations, decoy programs, and community outreach meetings. Qualitative measures include declarations of satisfaction from local officers and community members, and visible improvements in the physical conditions of targeted communities.

The main success of the program has been its effectiveness in strengthening the working relationship between ABC and the various local law enforcement agencies in California. This State and local partnership results in a more effective use of human resources, a reduction in crime, and a more efficient use of taxpayer funds. Of great interest has been the many businesses which voluntarily take active steps to eliminate loitering, litter, graffiti, drug paraphernalia, and excessive signage in windows.

The results have reduced calls for police service and improved conditions in neighborhoods impacted negatively by liquor stores and bars. Also of note is the program's success in working with communities sponsoring large special events, which have in the past resulted in violence and crime, with alcohol being one of the root causes.

Funding

ABC is a special fund agency. Its budget and this program are funded entirely by license fees from the alcoholic beverage industry.

Contact Information

3810 Rosin Court, Suite 150
 Sacramento, California 95834
 Phone (916) 263-6882; Fax (916) 263-7908